

Pakistan and the Tâlebân: State policy, religious networks and political connections

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The emergence of the Tâlebân in the autumn 1994 has dramatically changed the course of the Afghan civil war and the regional politics¹. The Tâlebân, in a very revolutionary move, has imposed a new clerical order, unknown in Afghanistan and arguably in the recent history of Muslim countries. Currently, the Tâlebân are not very popular with the media, especially in Europe where Masud, their main opponent, is seen as a new Che Guevara. If it is justified to point out the gap between the western/global values and the Tâlebân ideology, we have nonetheless to distance ourselves with some clichés and try to understand the complex nature of this movement, before assessing the Afghan-Pakistani relationship in the regional context.

The nature of the Tâlebân movement

Between 1994 and 1996, the Tâlebân have managed to control two-thirds of Afghanistan partly because they were able to gain a strong popular support, mostly in Pashtun and/or rural areas. Actually, the emergence of the Tâlebân is directly related to the anarchic situation of the South of Afghanistan in the 90's. Because of social and political fragmentation, it was not possible for the population to rely on a stable political power, and the fall of the Najib's government in 1992 did not represent a progress in terms of law and order. On the contrary, cities like Qandahâr were split between different commanders, who were fighting for

¹ For a general presentation of the war see Gilles Dorronsoro, *La révolution afghane*, Paris, Karthala, 2000.

futile motives in the center of the town. The schools were closed, the administration non-existent. The behavior of the political parties after the Soviet withdrawal has created the feeling that politics was purely instrumental. The growing distance between the mujahidin and the population was perceptible in the vocabulary used. Instead of Holy War (*jihād*) the term of civil war (*jang-i dakheli*) was currently used. The mujahidin were accused of racketing and killing. In this situation, the population was waiting for someone to stop the chaos provoked by the never-ending conflicts between local commanders. Those popular expectations were met by the Tālebān, who were sincerely committed to the reconstruction of a legal system in Afghanistan. Mullah Omar, the leader of the movement, has a distinctively charismatic legitimacy born from this popular expectation: his dreams were said to be sent by God².

A resurgence of a tribal power or a clerical organization?

Are the Tālebān the resurgence of the traditional model of mobilization in Pashtun (Pathan) areas? Some scholars think so³, but there are some strong arguments against that point of view. Contrary to what has happened in the past, mullah Omar is not an isolated charismatic ālem who has emerged temporarily in a situation of social discord to unite the Pashtun tribes⁴. He is instead the preeminent figure of a collective religious leadership with a global (although imprecise) vision for the Afghan society. The Tālebān have actually rebuilt a State, largely on the model of what existed in the fifties, and a legal system. Likewise, the fact that the Tālebān have systematically collected weapons is not consistent

² Lindholm, Charles, *Frontier Perspectives. Essays in Comparative Anthropology*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1996.

³ Roy, Olivier, "Has Islamism a Future in Afghanistan ? " in Maley, William (ed.), *Fundamentalism reborn? Afghanistan and the Tālebān*, London, Hurst and Company, 1998.

with the Tâlebân as a tribal phenomenon. Nor the fact that their interpretation of the shariat is frequently contradictory with the Pashtun tribal code (pashtunwâli), for exemple the ban on vendetta or the (limited) right of inheritance for women⁵.

In the long term, the victory of the Tâlebân is the result of the changing position of the ulemâ in the Afghan society. Traditionally, the main trend of the afghan ulemâ was reluctant to be involved in politics but, in the last century, they have gained more political weight in Afghanistan because of their opposition to the modernization⁶. Since the beginning of the State building, at the end of the 19th century, the ulemâ have played a key role in all protests against the government: in the 1924 and 1929 rebellions and, with less success, after the Second World War against several modernist laws, such as the abolition of the veil for women in 1959.

Their role in the social mobilization is explainable by their removal from the power⁷. Before the war, the ulemâ did not originate in the tribal aristocracy and they did not have enough ressources to keep a clientele, but they were closed to the people in the rural areas. In the Badakhshân province, for example, they were the spokesmen for the population⁸. The strong social influence of the ulemâ in the countryside explains that approximatively a quarter of the MPs in the 1964 parliament were of religious background⁹. In the spring of 1971, the ulemâ and the mullah

⁴ Edwards, David. B., " Charismatic leadership and political process in Afghanistan ", *Central Asian Survey* 5 (3-4), 1986.

⁵ Centlivres, Pierre, "Le mouvement Tâlebân et la condition féminine", *Afghanistan Info*, March, 1999.

⁶ Olesen, Asta, *Islam and Politics in Afghanistan*, Curzon Press, 1995.

⁷ Despite the efforts of the State to develop a network of govermental madrasa, the State-educated ulemâ were a minority before the war, and part of them became islamists.

⁸ Shahrani, M. N., " Causes and Context of Differential Reactions in Badakhshan to the Saur Revolution ", in M.N. Sharani and R. L. Canfield (ed.), *Revolutions and Rebellions in Afghanistan*, Berkeley, Institute of International Studies, 1984, page 152.

⁹ Duprée, Louis, " Comparative profiles of recents parliaments in Afghanistan ", *American Universities Field Staff Report*, vol XV, 4, 1971.

managed to organize a demonstration with thousands of persons which was much more than any political party could have done at that time.

During the war, some ulemâ became local commanders with the help of their religious students (tâlebân) and this direct and long-term participation in the political power was a new phenomenon in Afghan society. The ulemâ-commanders were found in all Afghanistan, but especially in the South Ghazni (Helmand, Bâdghis and Logar). Furthermore, the leaders of the political parties in exile were almost exclusively ulemâ. Hekmatyâr, the head of the Hezb-i islâmi, is the only notable exception. So, if we compare to what happened in the late twenties during the revolt against Amanullah in 1929¹⁰, it is noticeable that the ulemâ were no more just a force behind the scene that could legitimate the revolt against the State but not assume directly power.

The Tâlebân are, to a certain extent, the outcome of this process, but the leadership of the movement no longer comes from the old religious families (Mojaddidi¹¹ or Gaylâni¹²) who were quite influential in the religious field before the war. But, those families have been deeply involved in political games since the beginning of the war and have consequently lost part of their religious charisma. Then, the Tâlebân represent a brutal change in the religious field with the promotion of young and relatively uneducated mullah (see below)¹³.

The « shariatization » of the society

What is the ideological background of the Tâlebân? The idea of jihâd, considered as essential by the population, has defined the

¹⁰ See Poullada, Leon, *Reform and Rebellion in Afghanistan, 1919-1929 : King's Amanullah's Failure to transform a Tribal Society*, Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1973.

¹¹ A family of Naqshbanid pir established in Afghanistan at the beginning of the XIX century, descendant of the Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi (Kabul, 1564-Shihind, 1624).

¹² A family of pir from the Qaderi sufi order who settled in Afghanistan in 1905.

¹³ See Mariam Abou Zahab, " Les liens des Tâlebân avec l'histoire afghane", *Les Nouvelles d'Afghanistan* 85, 2^e trimestre, 1999.

legitimate ideological field since 1978. In comparison with the pre-war situation in Afghanistan, where there was a competition among different currents (nationalist, Maoist, islamist, communist), the ideological field is now much more homogeneous since everyone is referring to Islam. Since the beginning of the war, the ideology has also changed with a tougher stand on social issues from all parties, which want to attract a more rural and conservative population. Even if many of the ulemâ had a more open ideological stand before the war, it is evident that the majority of them now actively support a fundamentalist orientation. To a certain extent, the ideological differences between islamists and fundamentalists are fading on some issues (the rights of women for example). However, the islamists are still calling for a political system where the ulemâ have no special place and there is a growing *political* opposition between the two groups since the emergence of the Tâlebân.

The Tâlebân ideology, based on the islamization of society at a root level, is derived from the fundamentalist movement inspired by Shah Wallihullah (1703-1762) and the Deoband school¹⁴. This movement is a puritanist and reformist one, opposing unorthodox practices¹⁵. But, if the Tâlebân are more puritan and reactionary than the majority of the ulemâ before the war, they don't oppose to the traditional practices (Cult of the saints) and, therefore, they are acceptable by the rural population, in opposition with the wahabbite movement that has failed to gain support in Afghanistan.

The enforcement of the Shariat is the main point in the Tâlebân's political program, and their leadership is building a theocratic State in which the ulemâ have the power to designate and control the government. Furthermore, the Tâlebân do not permit the existence of any

¹⁴ Qeyamuddin, Ahmad, *The Wahhabi Movement in India*, Calcutta, 1966. The Afghans were the most numerous group of foreign students in Deoband at the end of the XIX century, see Metcalf, Barbara, *Islamic Revival in British India: Deoband, 1860-1900*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1982, page 111.

political parties and elections are said to be un-Islamic, as source of fitna (division) within the Muslim Community (umma). The present leader, mullah Omar, was recognized as Amir al-mominin by a shurâ of ulemâ in Qandahar (20 March to 4 April 1996) and is currently the main source of legislative texts¹⁶. It is a clear sign that the ultimate legitimacy of the power is not political, but religious and charismatic. This is why mullah Omar does not live in Kabul, the capital and political center, but in Qandahar.

Their interpretation of the Shariat is extremely conservative, condemning any attempt of ijtihad (interpretation) and, perhaps due to their common Pashtun background, forbidding any kind of public activity for women¹⁷. Adultery and male homosexuality are severely condemned, and stoning have been publicly conducted. Music is also forbidden to the end of jihâd, and search are conducted by the religious police in private houses. Any kind of representation of living creatures is prevented.

The political legitimization

The building of the new regime in Afghanistan is a quite complex phenomenon, where the question of legitimacy, the acceptance of a power as legitimate, plays a key role. In Afghanistan, Islam has been a source of legitimacy for every regime until 1978, and thereafter as well. For Abdul Rahman Khan (1880-1901) and his successors, Habibullah and Amanullah, the ulemâ had to recognize the divine source of the power of the Amir. This was a radical change because their predecessors were *primus inter pares*, the first amir having been elected by a tribal assembly in Qandahâr. The amir claimed Islamic legitimacy: the sermon should be

¹⁵ Jong (de), Frederik and Radtke, Bernd (ed.), *Islamic Mysticism Contested. Thirteen Centuries of Controversies and Polemics*, Leiden, Brill, 1999.

¹⁶ Mawlawi Rabbâni was also elected amir al-mominin but his main source of legitimation was his appointment by a political shurâ.

¹⁷ Marsden, Peter, *The Tâlebân: War, Religion and the New Order in Afghanistan*, London, Zed Books, 1998.

performed in his name, and this obligation was even referred to in the 1923 Constitution. (Today, the khotba is said in the name of Mollah Omar.) Therefore, when some mullah no longer preached the khotba (Friday sermon) in the name of Zâher Shâh as in 1971¹⁸, as a protest against some reforms, this omission had quite a political significance. The Tâlebân, it is interesting to notice, are coming back to a political legitimization of the power in religious terms. For example, the non-Muslims in Afghanistan must from now on wear some distinctive sign, which is reminiscent of an amendment to the 1923 Constitution by the Loya Jirga¹⁹ which imposed heavier taxes and distinctive signs on non-Muslims.

In accord to their religious discourse, the Tâlebân are refusing a pashtun nationalist ideology, but the qowm (network of solidarity) are playing a major part in the power structures. Most of the cadres are Pashtun mullah, originally from the Qandahar area. Mollah Omar's family is from Tarin Kot (province of Uruzgân) and the ulemâ coming from this place are found in power positions (Mollah Mohammad Abbas, the mayor of Qandahâr, for example). Besides, mollah Omar is a Hottak (a pashtun Ghilzay tribe) and it has been noticed that a strong number of ulemâ from this tribe are in the government in Kabul²⁰.

¹⁸ Kakar, Hasan, " The Fall of the Afghan monarchy in 1973 ", *International Journal of the Middle East Studies*, 9/2 : 195-214.

¹⁹ The Loya Jirga is the Great or National Council is the highest organ of state power. The Loya Jirga was composed of tribal chiefs, members of the royal family and religious elders (plus elected members of the Senate and National Assembly after the Constitution of 164). See Adamec, Ludwig W., *Historical Dictionary of Afghanistan*, London, The Scarecrow Press, 1991, p. 150.

²⁰ Private communication with Pierre Centlivres, March 1999.

The relationship with the Shiite minority

Even if the Tâlebân are refusing a nationalist ideology²¹, their relationship with the others ethnies and the shiite minority are not easy. The fact that the Tâlebân have been educated (for a part at least) in Pakistan implies that they are no more part of the persian cultural tradition. Being practically all Pashtun, they are perceived by the others groups as the return of the old domination of the Pashtun on the State.

As Sunni fundamentalists, the Tâlebân should have a antagonistic relationship with Shia (10 to 15% of the population), all the more so since they are Pashtun with an old tradition of feuding with Hazâras (80% of the Shia community is Hazara)²². But, surprisingly, the Tâlebân have been noticeably conciliatory with the Shiite minority during their advances in Uruzgân and Ghazni provinces, even if the death of the Hazara leader Mazâri in the hands of the Tâlebân (March 1995) destroyed this initial attempt to establish a good relationship with the Shiites. However, in the part of the country they control, the Tâlebân have stopped the armed robberies against Shiite Hazaras that had been quite common, especially in the Ghazni province and the Hazâras living there have come to an understanding with the Tâlebân.

In spite of that, after the fall of Mazar-i Sharif in August 1998, thousands of Hazaras were slaughtered by the victorious Tâlebân, in this way avenging the killing of their comrades the year before. Nonetheless, in November 1998, Akbari, a key figure of the Hezb-i wahdat, defected to the Tâlebân, offering cooperation and asking for a role in the government. The reason for this surrender, besides the fact that the military situation had been desperate for the Hezb-i wahdat, is the hope that Shia ulemâ

²¹ The Tâlebân like to point out the non-Pashtun members of their movement, for exemple Gaysuddin Aghâ, member of the shurâ in Kabul and native from Badakhshân.

²² Edwards, David B., " The Evolution of Shi'i Political Dissent in Afghanistan " in Cole, J.R.I. and Keddie N.R., *Shi'ism and Social Protest*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1986.

could find a place in a clerical State, even if dominated by Sunni. What is at stake here is the Tâlebân's ability to enlarge the government to ulemâ from different ethnic backgrounds. It is anyway too early to assess the definitive position of the Tâlebân in this matter and it seems that the popular feeling against the Shiites and more the Hazâras is growing. The Shia minority in Pakistan sees the Tâlebân as extremely anti-shia, but it is interesting to see that the real situation in Afghanistan is more complex.

The three levels relationship with Pakistan

Since 1994, the relationship of the Tâlebân with Pakistan is a controversial question. At first, the broad set of links between the Tâlebân and Pakistani society raises a preliminary question: are the Tâlebân a transnational movement? Most of the members of the Tâlebân originally came from the refugee camps in Pakistan and many of them have Pakistani identity cards because they were refugees there for years, but their "real" nationality is sometimes difficult to ascertain. A number of Pakistani citizens (besides ISI officers) have participated in the fightings alongside the Tâlebân, especially in the conquest of Jalalabad and Kabul. But the leadership of the Tâlebân is exclusively Afghan and the movement has no claim on the Pathan side of the border.

In fact, the Tâlebân are not a pure Pakistani creation nor only an Afghan phenomenon. This opposition is too simple and does not take into account the different levels of this relationship. That is why we will distinguish between the religious networks, the role of the political parties and the State policy.

The link between the Tâlebân and the Pakistani dini madrasa

In the 80', the Pakistan has seen a spectacular development of its network of the dini madrasa. Between 1960 and 1983, the number of *tâlebân* (students) has increased from 7 500 to 78 500 and the number of teachers from 321 to 2 27²³. This trend is not decreasing since in 1988 there was 1 320 dini madrasa in Penjab and 2 521 in 1997, educating 220 000 students²⁴. In Karachi alone, there are 29 *madrasa* with an average of 2 000 students a year²⁵. This situation is largely due to the Zia ul-Haq's policy of islamization (1977-1988). The recognition by the university of the diploma delivered in the dini madrasa and the compulsory zakat (a part of it going to the madrasa²⁶;) have been the main factors explaining this phenomenon. Furthermore, Ziâ ul-Haq has encouraged the building of *dini madrasa* in the NWFP to help the afghan *jihâd*, that is why the number of dini madrasa there is growing more rapidly than in the rest of the country.

Those madrasa are belonging to different religious schools: Deobandi, Barelwi, Ahl-i Adith. The syllabus of the deobandi and barelwi madrasa are generally very conservative, with a minimal opening to the modernity. For example, one the basic text still is the Dars-i nizamiyya, from the XVIII^e century ; the aristotelician logic is taught in its classical form. Some of those madrasa have a national influence, notably the Jamiyat ul-Ulum ul-Islâmiyah, created by Alama Yusuf Binari in Binari Town (near Karachi), educating 8 000 étudiants (with its 12 affiliated madrasa). The Dâr ul-Ulum Haqqâniyah madrasa in Akora Khattak (Peshawar district), created in 1947, has educated the third of the deobandi ulemâ in Pakistan, even if today its influence is less, at least for the proportion of students. The leader of this school is the secretay-general of the Jamiyat ul-ulemâ, maulana Sami

²³ Jamal Malik, *op. cit.*, p. 178.

²⁴ *The News International*, 28 mai 1997.

²⁵ *The Herald*, décembre 1997.

²⁶ Certaines *madrasa* ont cependant refusé le produit de la *zakât* pour garder leur indépendance.

ul-Haq. Others madrasa, belonging to the Ahl-i Adith current or linked to the Jamaat-i islami, are more open to modernity, at least in a technological sense (English language and computer are taught). The Jamaat-i islami has opened a lot of dini madrasa in the NWFP (41 madrasa, the third of the new ones in the province, and 19 after the Soviet invasion), even if the Deobandi are still the majority in the province. On the other hand, the Saudi Arabia has financed the new Jamiyat Imâm Bukhari madrasa in Peshawar, officially opened in June 1999 in the presence of Mohammad Abdul Rahmân, from the saudi ministry of religious affairs²⁷. Closed to the Ahl-i Hadith movement, the director of this *madrasa* is belonging to the Jamaat al-dawa al-Coran wa sunna, a movement active in the Kunar province of Afghanistan until the Tâlebân took over the place.

What is the place of the Afghan students in those dini madrasa ? With the war, the proportion of Afghan students have noticeably increase. In 1982, approximatively 9 % of the tâlebân in the NWFP are Afghans and this proportion has rapidly increased²⁸. For exemple, the majority of the 750 students of the Jamiyat Imâm Bukhari madrasa that we mentioned earlier are Afghans. Likewise, 15 % of the students of the Dâr ul-Ulum Haqqâniyah madrasa were Afghans in 60', they were 60% in 1985²⁹. The Afghans students have generally joined the deobandi madrasa because of the historical links between the Afghan ulemâ and the Dâr ul-Ulum Deoband madrasa (in India), even if, today, the relationship between this madrasa and the Pakistani Deobandi movement is limited. Under the generic term " deobandi ", one finds in fact different kind of discourses and one can not overestimate the education of those ulemâ and the coherence of their ideology.

Most of the Tâlebân ulemâ have been educated in in the NWFP during the war. In particular, the Dar ul-Ulum Haqqâniyah in Akora Khattak

²⁷ *The News International*, 25 juin 1999.

²⁸ Jamal Malik, *op. cit.*, p. 206.

²⁹ Jamal Malik, *op. cit.*, p. 207.

(NWFP) has trained some of the most important cadres of the movement³⁰. There are strong links of solidarity between the ulemâ trained in the same madrasa and between their students (tâlebân). The ulemâ who are in control of the Tâlebân movement have a strong group consciousness even if, as in any other organization, they have also conflicts.

Besides the presence of Afghan Tâlebân, the Pakistani madrasa are directly linked to the Afghan war because the participation in the jihâd is seen as the natural prolongation of the schooling. Most of the volunteers are Afghans but some Pakistani citizen are also participating in the jihâd, generally originating from the NWFP and the Baluchistan, and less often from Sindh or Punjab. When Qandahâr was taken by the Tâlebân in september 1994, the first Tâlebân were coming from the madrasa in Baluchistan (Chaman, Gulistan, Jangal Pir Alizay, Pishin, Qila Abdullah). In December 1994, 4 000 *tâlebân* joining the fight in Afghanistan were originating from all part of the NWFP and Baluchistan³¹. The Deputy Chief of Citizens-Police Liaison Committee de Karachi has recently stated that 600 or 700 Tâlebân have been send in Afghanistan in May 1997³². In August 1999, thousands of Afghan and Pakistani tâlebân came in Afghanistan to reinforce mullah Omar's troupes.

The connection with the Pakistani fundamentalist parties

Most of the islamists and fundamentalists parties in Pakistan have put the Afghan jihâd on the top of their agenda. Those movements are known for their difficulties to gain a significant support

³⁰ Matinuddin, Kamal, *The Afghan Phenomenon. Afghanistan 1994-1997*, Karachi/Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1999, page 17.

³¹ The Maulana Nur Mohammad Saqib madrasa in Kacha Garhi Camp, Ziâ ul-madaris in Peshawar, Hashmia Madrasa in Bara, Dâr ul-Ulum Haqqâniyâh in Akora Khattak etc., see *The News International*, December 11, 1994.

³² Owais Tohid, *The Herald*, December 1997.

during the elections and they try to mobilise individuals with highly emotional issues, especially in relation with the Kashmir and Afghan jihād. The bin Laden case is a good example of the success of this type of mobilization because he was not very famous before the American strikes in Afghanistan³³.

Yet, the Tâlebân have not a general support: the Deobandi movements are closed to them, but the islamists are clearly reticent or opposed. The Tâlebân have well-known connections with the Jamiat ul-Ulemâ-i Islam which built up support among the Durrani tribes in NWFP and Baluchistan during the 90's. Maulana Fazlur Rahman, the leader of this party and himself a Pashtun, is the former Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Commission of the Parliament and was close to Benazir Bhutto. In addition, we have seen that the Dar ul-Ulum Haqqâniyah madrasa led by Maulana Sami ul-Haq (leader of a splinter faction of the Jamiat ul Ulemâ-i Islami since 1986) has provided hundreds of recruits for the Afghan jihād. On the contrary, the Jamaat-i islami was a support for the Hezb-i islami during all the war and did not transfer its support to the Tâlebân³⁴. Yet, there have been contacts between the leadership of the Tâlebân and the amir of Jamaat-i islâmi, Qazi Husein Ahmed, who proposed a peace-mission between Iran and Afghanistan. The Jamaat-i Islami, which was closed to the Hezb-i Islami, seems now seek for a rapprochement with the Tâlebân. The Ahl-i Hadith have also a very distant relationship with the Tâlebân and they refuse to consider their fight as a jihād. The Jamiat-i Ahl-i Hadith (Pakistani and Afghan wing) have made some official statements regretting the presence of tâlebân on the frontline³⁵.

³³ Recently, Osama has become a very popular name in the NWFP for the new borned (*Khaleej Times Friday, July 9, 1999*).

³⁴ Qazi Husain Ahmad, the current leader of the Jamaat-i islami, was the link between the mojahiddin and the Pakistani government. He said one 'The Afghan case stands as the only tangible victory for Islam" (Seyyed Vali Reza Nasr, *Mawdudi and the Making of Islamic Revivalism*, Curzon Press, 1996, p.75).

³⁵ *Dawn* July 9, 1997.

Besides, fundamentalist movements have settled their training camps for the Kashmiris mujâhddin in Afghanistan. The military wing of the Jamaat-i Islami, the Hezb ul-mojâhidin, the Harakat ul-Ansar (also known as Harakat ul-mojâhidin), and others transnational groups as bin Laden's al-Qaida, are or have been in Afghanistan. For example, the Salman Farsi camp in Jawad (near the Pakistani border) was initially a Hezb ul-mojâhidin camp, then the militants of this organization were expelled by the Tâlebân and some were arrested by the Pakistani authorities. Later, the camp was used by the Harakat ul-Ansar, under the leadership of mawlawi Jabbar in Afghanistan et Qari Fazlur Rahman Khalil in Pakistan. The militants were coming mostly from Punjab and were militarily trained for one to six months³⁶. Another camp in Darwanta, near Jalâlâbâd initially open by Hekmatyâr for some Arab militants, then closed after the fall of Jalalabad in September 1996, was also used by the Harakat ul-Ansar.

But the origin and the evolution of the fundamentalist movements in Pakistan are clearly autonomous from the Afghan crisis, even if the policy of developing the network of madrasa is an indirect effect of the Afghan war. The sectarian violence is not an effect of the Afghan war nor a by-product of the emergence of the Tâlebân. For example, the Sipah-i Sahaba (Anjuman Sipah-i Sahaba Party), created in 1989 under the leadership of Maulana Azam Tariq and pushing the State to declare the Shiites as non-Muslims, is most probably a consequence of the instrumentalization of Islam by the Pakistani government under Zia ul-Haq, even if the militants have fought in Afghanistan, especially for the battle in Mazar-i Sharif where they massacred hundreds of Shiite Hazara people.

³⁶ *The News International* August 23, 1998.

The Tâlebân and the Pakistani State

The long term goals of the Pakistan are more or less the same since the beginning of the war: to establish a protectorate State in Kabul to avoid the return of the traditional alliance between Afghanistan and Pakistan and, then, to open the Central Asia to the Pakistani influence. The Pakistani influence was visible on three levels. The political affairs were supervised by the military and the ISI, the diplomatic level was controlled by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the refugees by the Commissioner for Afghan Refugees. Since the Hezb-i Islâmi has revealed itself too weak to fulfill its role, the Tâlebân became the clients of the Pakistani State.

So, the Pakistani strategy vis-à-vis Afghanistan is not depending on the political color of the government. Originally, support for the Tâlebân originated in the government of Benazir Bhutto. The replacement of Benazir Bhutto by Nawaz Sharif did not signaled a noticeable change in the Afghan policy as the support to the Tâlebân was the basis of Nawaz Sharif's policy toward Afghanistan. Yet, all governments and institutions in Pakistan have not uniformly endorsed the Tâlebân. The Foreign Ministry and the ISI (which is Pashtun dominated) were instrumental in developing support for the Tâlebân, in spite of the more balanced view of Nawaz Sharif and Army Chief of Staff General Jehangir Karamat (both Punjabis).

The help of the Pakistan to the Tâlebân is well documented and the building of the Tâlebân military force is unexplainable without the large support of the ISI³⁷. The point here is not to single out Pakistan for helping an Afghan faction, but to notice that Pakistan's support was much broader and more effective than that of India or Russia for Masud or that of Iran for Hezb-i Wahdat. Pakistani officers have fought alongside the Tâlebân on different occasions and Pakistani logistical support has been

essential in crucial moments. For example, during the advance of Ismaël Khan towards Qandahâr in the spring of 1995, the logistical support of Pakistan was decisive, allowing the Tâlebân to resist and counter-attack successfully. Besides, since the fall of Kabul in 1996, the opponents of the Tâlebân living in the NWFP are under the threat of assassination³⁸. In 1999, the murder of Karzay in Quetta has coincided with a new tentative of the royalists to push a diplomatic solution. But the Tâlebân are by no means ISI puppets as we can conclude from a few examples. The move to take Herat in the spring of 1995 was premature and made against the will of ISI officers.

The emergence of the Tâlebân is itself a by-product of the Pakistani policy. After 1992 the ISI director lieutenant-general Naved Nasir, appointed by Nawaz Sharif, was supporting Hekmatyâr. Then the failure of the Hezb-i islâmi to take Kabul was also the failure of the ISI, from which the influence was in question. Après Nawaz Sharif's dismissal by président Ghulam Ishaq Khan in 1993, général Nasir was also move away in July as tens of Pakistani officers of the ISI. The new director of the ISI, lieutenant-general Javed Ashraf Ghani, was under the authority of General Nasrullah Babar, Ministry of Interior in Benazir Bhutto's government and special adviser of her father for the Afghan affairs in the 70'. At the beginning, Nasrullah Babar's policy toward Afghanistan was not very clear and he gave an interview in the Frontier Post (30 April 1994) where is speaks in favor of the return of the King Zâher Shâh. But, the main objective was the opening of a road toward Turkmenistan and Central Asia. In September 1994, Nasrullah Babar and Ismaël Khân have made together the official opening of a new Consulat in Herat. The Tâlebân militia was originally organized to ensure the security of the road and the free circulation of the convois

³⁷ Rashid, Ahmed, " Pakistan and Taleban", in Maley, William (ed.), *Fundamentalism Reborn ? Afghanistan and the Taleban*, London, Hurst and compagny, 1998.

³⁸ *State and Human Rights in 1988*, p.293.

between Quetta and Ashrabad. The first military operation of the Tâlebân inside Afghanistan was provoked the capture of a Pakistani convoi organized with the National Logistic Cell, at the beginning of November 1994, by some commanders near Qandahâr. The surprising success of the Tâlebân created a new opportunity for the Pakistani government to built a pro-Pakistan government in Kabul.

Pakistani Afghan policy in the regional context

The Tâlebân have their own agenda in foreign policy and it was initially revolutionary, ressembling in some respects with the Iranian regime immediately after 1979. In particular, the Tâlebân are engaged in a confrontation with the Central Asian states and Iran. The Tâlebân have certainly political ambitions directed against the post-communist regimes that were established after the collapse of the USSR. Therefore, the Tâjik civil war has an Afghan dimension. About 40 000 Tâjik refugees entered Afghanistan were in part under the control of different Afghan political parties (in Kunduz). The help of those movements for the Tâjik refugees was not conducted on an ethnic basis, as we can conclude from the fact that Pashtun-dominated parties like Ettehâd or Hezb-i islami were the most important donors to Tâjik refugees. Since the Tâlebân have been in control of Kunduz province, they have helped the Tâjik refugees by sending arms and volunteers fighting in the name of the jihâd. So, i have interviewed Tâlebân mojâhidin who came from Tâjikistan in January 1997³⁹. It is of course difficult to assess the number of Afghan mojâhidin in Tâjikistan, but we can roughly guess their number as in a few hundreds. In Central Asia, the Tâlebân are commonly seen has a major factor of destabilization.

³⁹ Interview in Ghazni, January 1997.

Some difficulties have also arisen in the relationship of the Tâlebân with Iran. It is important here to note that the two regimes are fundamentally different and have no ideological affinities or whatever⁴⁰. The killing of Iranian diplomats during the fall of Mazar-i Sharif was the immediate cause of the tension and the build up of a military force on the Afghanistan border made some people think for sometime that Iran was on the verge of launching an attack against Afghanistan.

But the Tâlebân are also seeking the recognition of the international community for political and economical reasons. This trend seems dominant since at least the fall of Mazar-i Sharif in 1988, but the bin Laden affair has prevented them to do so. The missile attack of August 20 on alleged terrorist bases in Zhawar (Paktia) may have marked a turning point in US policy towards Afghanistan. The United States has ruled out any kind of dialogue with the Tâlebân since they have refused to act against Osama bin Laden. On September 22, the Tâlebân officially announced that they were closing the Osama bin Laden case because the US administration failed to provide any evidence showing his involvement in terrorist activities. This means that the Tâlebân have been obliged to pay a high diplomatic price (no recognition from the United States) and an economic one (no oil and gas pipeline from Central Asia) to keep their political supports. On the other hand, Saudi Arabia (one of the three states, with Pakistan and the United Arab Emirates, to recognize the Tâlebân government) expelled the Tâlebân diplomatic representative on September 22, in reprisal for the Tâlebân's continued harboring of Osama bin Laden. Saudi Arabia is also said to have reduced its aid to the Tâlebân a few months ago and is coming to a rapprochement with Iran. In September 1998, Teheran asked the help of Riyadh to obtain the liberation of its diplomats and, for the past few months, the Saudi

⁴⁰ Besides the fact that the two countries are respectively sunni and shia, the Iranian revolution was not essentially the product of the mobilization of the ulemâ, see

newspapers frequently have been critical of the Tâlebân and have stayed neutral in the last crisis between Afghanistan and Iran.

Besides that, the attitudes of the Tâlebân towards human rights led to a series of confrontation with the NGOs and the UN agencies up until July 1998, when after unacceptable conditions imposed by the Tâlebân, most of the NGOs left Kabul (they have returned progressively in 1999). Afghanistan under the Tâlebân is now a "rogue State", defined as outside the set of norms of behavior acceptable by the international community (i-e mostly the western States). The relationship with the Pakistan is therefore of great importance for the Tâlebân to avoid a complete isolation on the regional scene.

The consequences of the manipulation of the Tâlebân by Pakistan are such that we can ask if this is really consistent with the official goals of Pakistani politics. More specifically, there is some sort of contradiction in Pakistan's Central Asian policy. If Afghanistan is seen as a way to open Central Asia to Pakistan, the support for the Tâlebân is inhibiting all forms of cooperation with formerly communist regimes, which are dominated by governments that are extremely worried about a fundamentalist destabilization. In others words, this means that the new regime in Kabul is an obstacle to Pakistani projects in Central Asia. On the whole, the relationship between Central Asian countries and Pakistan have been deteriorated by the Pakistani support to the Tâlebân.

Following the advance of the Tâlebân in the North, the Ministers of Defense from Central Asia met in Tashkent and Moscow is pushing to reinforce the security system on the Amu Dria. After the fall of Kabul in September 1996, the Central Asian countries and Russia had already organised a meeting dealing with security problems. During the

ECO meeting in May 1997, the Pakistan was overetly accused of destabilizing Central Asian via the Tâlebân. The 1999 offensive has provoked a new surge of protestations from the regional powers and the ONU, against the Pakistan as well as the Tâelbân. The presence of Afghans in the Tâjikistan fighting alongside with the local islamists (until this year) was a source of worryng in Central Asia.

On a commercial level, Iran is offering a way to avoid Afghanistan. The building of a railway from Turkmenistan to Iran is a way to avoid Afghanistan. Besides, the Pakistani State has not apparently the means to rebuild the Afghan infrastructures. Since almost 6 years that the Tâlebân are in control os Qandahâr, the Pakistan has not been able to fund the building of a new road to Quetta.

Finally, Pakistan's relationship with United States has been damaged by its support to the Tâlebân and the bombing against Osama bin Laden was also, to a certain extent at least, a signal to the Pakistani government. The diplomatic cost of its Afghan policy is currently high for Pakistan. Pakistan's support for the Tâlebân seems to contradict official goals in regional politics, and this brings us to emphasize the links between Tâlebân and Pakistani political parties to explain the attitude of the Pakistani government towards the Tâlebân.

Conclusions

It is not yet clear if the military coup in Pakistan has signaled a real change in the Afghan policy of Pakistan. But the fact is that there is not alternative policy for Pakistan now. The defeat of the Tâlebân in the North would be the beginning of a new phase of disorder since Masud is not a credible political alternative in Afghanistan and his

alliance with the former communist militia and Shiites would be short lived in case of success. More disorder on its Afghan border is by no way a desirable result for any Pakistani government.

Besides there is no likely « Talibanization » of the Pakistan since the success of the Tâlebân movement has been the result of many different factors, notably the existence of rural masses and a weak level of social differentiation. The situation in Pakistan is quite different and the Tâlebân's impact on Pakistani politics will probably have a limited dimensions. The Tâlebân harbor training camps for fundamentalist organizations fighting for Kashmir or against the United States. As a matter of fact, some Pakistani citizens belonging to Harakat ul-Ansar were killed during the missile attack against Zhawar. And to change this complex relationship with Afghanistan would need a profound modification in the foreign and domestic Pakistani policy.

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